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JONESTOWN: A MODEL OF COOPERATION

In October, 1974, a small group of settlers from the United States-based Peoples Temple Church came to Guyana to begin development of the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project. They found themselves in a land of spectacular beauty, towering, graceful trees, and beautiful, friendly people of many races. Here they set about building a community that would be named Jonestown by Guyanese officials, after the founder of the Temple and the initiator of the project, Rev. Jim Jones.

The purpose of the Agricultural Project was to provide a community where new methods of food production and crops could be tried and made available to others in the developing country of Guyana, and eventually to offer medical and educational services to residents of the sparsely populated Northwest Region where the project is located.

Rev. Jones, who struggled for 30 years in the United States for equal rights for the black and poor, founded the Peoples Temple on the model of Apostolic Christianity: an interracial, sharing community dedicated to work unceasingly against the evils of racism, hunger, and injustice. First in the Midwest, then on the West Coast of the United States, the Temple provided a wide range of services for the elderly and destitute. The Peoples Temple in San Francisco and its thousands of members there and across the country are thrilled by the progress of Jonestown and are raising funds to assure the continuing expansion of this highly successful project.

The Third-world nation of Guyana has offered not only a beautiful natural environment for the Agricultural Project, but an opportunity for Temple members to put into practice cherished principles of racial and economic equality, human service and cooperative living. In enthusiastic response to the Guyanese government's drive to feed, clothe, and house its people, many members began training years ago in the United States, in skills that would become an integral part of the growing Jonestown community: medicine, construction, and agriculture.

Today the population of the community is over 1000. Hundreds of acres teem with crops, some native, some newly introduced. Seedlings and young fruit trees are started in a nursery; scientific methods and testing, and advice from local Amerindians and Guyanese government agricultural experts is proving to be a very good combination, as season follows productive season. Lush pastures support the growing herds of swine and dairy cattle. Thousands of chickens thrive in sanitary housing and modern incubators. Several horses are enjoyed by all the children, and are used for light hauling as well.

Industry is everywhere, from the construction crews to the cassava mill, where tasty *cassareep* is produced. Cottage industries are flourishing: handcrafted toys; cabinets and furniture of excellent quality; a shoemaker's shop; beautiful baskets, colorful rugs, and garments of every size which, besides being original and attractive, are very well made. Each article reflects the loving work of skilled hands in the peaceful and productive environment that only cooperative social organization can achieve. The machine shop serves a dual purpose: the project's many machinists and mechanics are able to perform repairs and fashion makeshift parts, and the shop is also a classroom, where welding and metalworking

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skills, as well as shop safety, are taught as part of the educational curriculum.

The jungle has receded and now frames a setting of gently rolling pastures, croplands and orchards. We are experimenting to find new crops that will be adaptable to the climate and growing conditions of Guyana, and to discover new uses for crops that are native to the area. We have had some very encouraging successes.

The medical clinic is open around the clock; trained personnel include: a medical doctor, a pharmacist, a dietician, a pediatric specialist, several nurse practitioners, a number of RNs and LVNs, EKG, X-ray and lab technicians, plus many medical assistants, full-time health care workers, and trainees. There are facilities for lab work, EKG monitoring and surgery. The amateur radio has been a lifeline in many situations; calls for medical assistance have brought all kinds of specialists to their radio sets, responding with vital information and assistance.

The success of the Peoples Temple cooperative has created a network of goodwill that, together with word-of-mouth reports, has brought a steady stream of visitors to the project. We have been pleased to welcome guests from various ministries of the Guyanese government, as well as dignitaries, officials and travelers from all over the world. We have found an almost universal appreciation for the beauty of interracial, cooperative living and a recognition of the unique and important role that Guyana and her government have taken in the leadership of the developing nations of the world.

This is Jonestown. Yet even as the story is told, new changes and developments make it another chapter in the history of this very unique community which one visitor called: "A model that should be emulated all over the world..." Its horizons are the endless horizons of the emerging people of Guyana, who are building a new life in this independent, socialistic country whose goal of "feeding, clothing and housing its people" is so closely allied with the human service ideal that Jim Jones has enacted for many years, and which he and his church have been able to realize more fully here in Guyana, than ever before.